

To James Freeman Clarke.

Leicester, Jan. 12, 1886.

Dear James:

Whenever you can manage to send me a copy of your lines for the Class (last week) I shall have a particular pleasure in adding them to the Class-collection; and perhaps sending copies to some of the absentees. Have you any present view as to printing them?

Have you been able to get the time to read the Garrison vols? I want you to read them! thoroughly & faithfully! Others,- beyond the circle of the immed. friends,- who knew him intimately & could reconcile what to outsiders seemed contradictory, harsh, &c, &c,- have spoken of the vols. as of extraordinary interest to them, both for the remarkable character set forth, and for the attractive form, of style, arrangement, grouping, &c. in wh. that character is presented. I have recently seen Garrison likened to Peter the Hermit - with truth, I suppose, (so far as I know the latter) as regards his force of character, firmness of purpose, absolute devotion to his idea. But Peter was, I think, eminently a "man of one idea" - as it was so common to accuse Garrison with being; yet very falsely,- as witness the accusation of another set of his critics that he would not let the church, and the Sabbath, and Non-resistance, and "the confounded Woman question" alone, and stick to his Antislavery text. The Woman-question, clearly, was thrown right across his path - was a vital

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question as to the life & conduct of the A. S. cause, and could not be avoided, if he had been so disposed, As to the others, he used the liberty- no more no less- that every man who thinks at all, uses. His real distinction, it seems to me, is, that he was absolutely uncompromising- wherein he seems to me to stand alone among Americans,* or nearly that ;:- actually so, on the conspicuous scale of a long-protracted, national contest. He would not knowingly lower or deviate from, his principles, his sense of right & duty. He w. not know expediency, adaptation to men & times & places, (ie. in y^e sense of yielding anything of the demands of absolute right.) This was his early distinction - this was where he became an educator and a power - this is what gained for him the confidence of many,- and their confidence became entire trust, and for the reason that, not for life and all its gifts & honors, would he swerve- or temporize - or make concession of the claims of justice. He had no right to make such concessions, he would have said, and would be false to his convictions, and to his calling, if he did. I see that D. Bartol has been drawing a comparison between him & D. Channing; and I must say I thought it weak and very unworthy of so good a soul as Dr. B. He seems not even to have read his New Testament lately, except as to "viper" - a pretty hard word, and very far from the only one.- Suppose the A. S. cause had been left in the hands of our dear Henry Ware, of D^m Channing, and of Leonard Bacon, &

the like, who opposed slavery after their fashion!
Neither you nor I can ^d know where it w. have been; but
I believe ^d Slavery w. have continued to grow, as it
did under the rebukes and well-reasoned opposition of
Jefferson, Franklin, and their co-workers & contemporaries;
would have more & more humiliated the North,
and worked its will with the Nation. Slavery required,
for its overthrow, what Garrison brought, - and barely
brought in time - and yet not in time for anything but
the bloody arbitration, the worst, most awful of all. No
blame to him for that, Had the American Churches - which
G. essayed to bring up to their duty - been united in
demanding the cessation of Slavery, it would have gone
down without a drop of blood; Albert Barnes, no fanatic
or extremist, affirms that. How can Dr. Channing be
put forward as the leader? God knows I honor D. ^r Ch.,
and admit the great & good work which he did - did
very bravely in many respects, - and yet with continual
self-imposed limitations, which to me look like hesi-
tancy & doubt rather than a sublime trust in truth &
justice. I do not want to detract a particle from D.
C.'s just fame; but the principle of "magis amica
veritas" must hold for him, as for other men. It seems
to ^r me that D. C. was ^r indebted to M. ^r Garrison for his
audience mainly. His words would have had no considera-
tion with the multitude, but for the uncompromising
demands wh. had preceded them and gone all over the land,

1. The first part of the document is a letter from the

author to the editor of the journal, dated 1962.

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and made men begin to realize that something had got to be done; then they made a merit of listening to the more careful & measured words which D. C. gave them, and professed to be convinced by him, when it was the earlier voice which had aroused them.- Do you think Dr. C. w^d have written his book, had it not been for G.'s pioneer work? Then there are, in my judgement, positive stains upon D. Channing's position and course, as an opponent of slavery, which cannot be excused, or winked out of sight. Witness his refusal to meet, confer with, or otherwise recognize M. C^r Garrison! Read that respectful, deferential, eloquent appeal to him by Garrison (vol. I. 464), and think, that D. C. never noticed it! Most shameful, I say;- the letter was enough to cause the stones to cry out. Witness his counsel to Mrs. Chapman, to withdraw from the A. S. work, to suppress her convictions; and more of the same. I will never forget, or be silent on, his good work, his courage in some connexions, his fine spirit often. But his course does not admit of indiscriminate defence; for it had many mistakes, & some serious faults. The Unitarian writers, as yet, have not done themselves any credit- with the manifest exception of Chadwick - in their notices of the Garrison vols.- the Chr. Reg.^r has been lamentably deficient.-

Always truly Yrs.
Sam'l May

* Caleb Stetson called Compromise "the great American devil"-

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